



From left, David and Abraham Gómez and their uncle José belong to the family-run Morphix Group, a Mexico City special effects company.

VAMPIRES DRAW BIG CROWDS

'Fear belongs in a place like this or in the movies, not in the real world,' say organizers of this macabre exhibit

BY JIM JOHNSTON
Special to The News

Day of the Dead and Halloween have come and gone, but fascination with the macabre, violent, and gory aspects of life can be found all over Mexico year-round. The Mummy Museum in Guanajuato, The National Museum of Death in Aguascalientes, and the Museum of Instruments of Torture and Capital Punishment here in the D.F. are all popular destinations for family outings. Even in church you'll find paintings and statues whose graphic depiction of the passion of Christ or the saints can make many foreigners shiver.

So when I saw the announcement of a new show at the Police Museum here in Mexico City, my curiosity was aroused. "Vampiros y Hombres Lobos: Mitos y Realidades"

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DAVID GÓMEZ
Member of the Morphix Group

("Vampires and Werewolves: Myths and Realities") is the follow-up to last year's blockbuster show "Serial Killers," which was seen by more than a quarter of a million people. If first week attendance is any indication, the current show will be another mega-hit.

The exhibition consists of a dozen small rooms filled with stage-like dioramas, videos, maps and explanatory texts. Mixing legend and fact, the show seeks to educate as well

as to thrill. Much of it would have U.S. parents up in arms as overly violent and gory (there is no parental advisory here), but people I spoke to seemed to enjoy it.

Yadira and Eunice, both 17, particularly liked the room full of caskets. Manuel and Daniela, a young couple out on a date, preferred the vampire babies. Six-year old Maria Carmen hid behind her mother and shyly giggled "Sí" when I asked her if she liked the show, leaving me with the feeling that a big old gringo was far more frightening to her than the vampires.

Special attention is given to Mexican vampires, including several from Aztec and Maya myths, and the famed "chupacabras," that half-man, half-animal bloodsucker that often appears in Mexican newspapers. Perhaps the most shocking display, however, is a full-scale recreation of the kitchen of Richard Trenton Chase, "The Vampire of Sacramento," who was convicted of six murders in 1979. He's shown eviscerating a female victim, while behind him, the open refrigerator shows grizzly evidence that he didn't shop at his local supermarket.

The show is largely the work of the family-run Morphix Group, a Mexico City-based special effects company that has worked on many films (among them Mel Gibson's "Apocalypse" and Guillermo del Toro's "The Labyrinth of the Faun"). I spoke with Abraham and David Gómez, and their uncle José. "We're known as 'the horror family,'" David Gómez, one of the family members, told me gleefully. "We eat, breathe and sleep horror."

Aside from their special effects work, the company also produces masks and novelty items for Halloween. Two years of research and fabrication went into the current exhibit, and the Gómez family is clearly proud of the results.

"A few people have fainted - mostly adults - and a couple of people came out after seeing half the show, but in general people really like it," José Gómez explained.

"The real monsters are out there," said Abraham Gómez, pointing to the street. "A lot of politicians are using fear these days to control people. We think fear belongs in places

like this or in the movies, not out in the real world."

Luckily, the curators offer several time-honored ways of warding off vampires, beyond the usual ones of holy water, silver bullets and a wooden stake through the heart. Wearing red, sleeping in reverse (your head where your feet would normally be), or hiding near a flowing stream will help, and be sure not to answer the door unless you hear three knocks - vampires can't count beyond two. Once bitten, a vampire's victim can be purified by drinking the ashes of a dead vampire mixed with a little water.

And did you know that Saturday is the best day to catch a vampire? Werewolves can be warded off by salt or frogs, or by hanging a colander on your front door - they're forced to stop and count all the holes.

There's a little gift counter out front where you can buy a catalog, or a souvenir key chain sporting a bloody, severed fingertip ("they're hand-made" the salesgirl assured me).

EXHIBIT ZEO

Learn some time-honored ways to ward off vampires.

"Vampiros y Hombres Lobos: Mitos y Realidades" ("Vampires and Werewolves: Myths and Realities")
The Police Museum is located at Victoria 82 (near Revillagigedo, Metro Juárez).
The show is open 7 days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and is expected to run for six months.
The 55-peso admission (\$5 for children) makes this the most expensive museum show in town, but it does not seem to have affected attendance.